



Nevada Operations Office News

National Nuclear Security Administration

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DOE Issues Los Alamos Technical Area 18 Relocation Final Environmental Impact Statement

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Department of Energy's (DOE) National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) has issued the Technical Area 18 Final Environmental Impact Statement (TA-18 Final EIS). The TA-18 Final EIS evaluates the environmental impacts associated with relocating a portion of the TA-18 capabilities and materials to the following alternative locations: (1) a different site at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) at Los Alamos, New Mexico; (2) the Nevada Test Site (NTS) near Las Vegas, Nevada; (3) the Sandia National Laboratories (SNL) at Albuquerque, New Mexico; and (4) the Argonne National Laboratory-West (ANL-W) near Idaho Falls, Idaho.

In the Final EIS, the acting Administrator of the NNSA designated the NTS alternative as the preferred alternative for activities involving Security Category I/II materials, which constitute roughly half of the activities conducted at TA-18. The NTS alternative, which would house four of the five TA-18 experimental reactors in the existing Device Assembly Facility (DAF), was designated the preferred alternative based upon cost, technical, environmental, and mission factors.

The DAF, which was constructed in the late 1980s when nuclear weapons testing was still in progress, was originally designed to provide high-explosive and nuclear explosive assembly operations. NNSA's preferred alternative also has the balance of the TA-18 missions, involving mostly Security Category III/IV materials and operations, remaining at LANL. A Record of Decision on the TA-18 Final EIS is expected in September 2002.

The TA-18 facilities at LANL are the nation's only facilities capable of performing general-purpose nuclear materials handling and criticality experiments. These experiments provide unique training to a variety of federal agencies, including DOE, NNSA, and Nuclear Regulatory Commission personnel in areas such as nuclear materials safety, emergency response in support of counterterrorism activities, and safeguards and arms control in support of programs aimed at controlling excess nuclear materials.